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Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for assigning private Internet Protocol ("IP") addresses to network devices in a cluster, each of the network devices being capable of interconnecting at least two network segments and forwarding data frames from one network segment to another, said method comprising:

reading the Media Access Control ("MAC") address of a first network device;

generating a private IP address as a function of said MAC address;

assigning said private IP address to said first network device; ~~and~~

communicating with said first network device using said private IP address; and [.]

detecting, at the first network device, a conflict between the assigned private IP address

and an IP address being used by a network device other than the first network device.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein said first network device is a LAN switch.

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said private IP address is automatically generated by adding the values of one or more bytes of said MAC address to a base private IP address.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 3, wherein said first network device is a LAN switch.